

DREAM REELS

VideoFilms and Environments
by Jud Yalkut

November 4—December 3, 2000

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum of American Art

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Still from Jud Yalkut and Yayoi Kusama, *Kusama's Self-Obliteration*, 1967

ENVIRONMENTS

November 4–12

USCO, *Yin/Yang sine/pulse*, with Jud Yalkut, 1967
Two 16mm films (color, silent, continuous loops), two 16mm film projectors, two film loopers, weather balloons, motorized mount, and silver metallized PVC walls

Collection of the artist

November 17–22

Destruct Film, 1967
One 16mm film (color, silent, continuous loop), 35mm slides, one 16mm film projector, one film looper, two 35mm slide projectors, two motorized beam-splitter mirrors, and loose film stock

Collection of the artist

November 25–December 1

Vision Cantos, 2000
Three videotapes (color, silent, continuous loops), three video projectors, and two video decks

Video produced at the Experimental Television Center, Owego, New York

Collection of the artist

FILM PROGRAM

16mm film, color, silent, continuous loops
16mm film, color, silent, continuous loops
16mm film, color, silent, continuous loops

Saturday and Sunday, December 2–3

Screenings are repeated each day except where noted.

NOON

The Participating Camera: Film Journals and Diaries

Kusama's Self-Obliteration, with Yayoi Kusama, 1967, 24 min. Saturday only.

Planes, 1968–72, with Simone Forti for Trisha Brown, 17 min. Sunday only.

John Cage Mushroom Hunting in Stony Point, 1972–73, silent, 8 min.

Metamedia: A Film Journal of Intermedia and the Avant-Garde 1966–1970, 1972, silent, 50 min. In fifteen sections:

1. Timothy Leary's psychedelic celebration *The Resurrection of Christ* at the Village Theatre, New York, 1966.

2. USCO, *Lower East Side: Past and Present*, projection environment, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1966.

3. Ken Dewey, *Red, White and Blue*, car collision happening, Group 212, Woodstock, New York, July 4, 1967.

4. Phyllis Yampolsky, *Feast of Connection for the First 50 Strangers*, Group 212, Woodstock, New York, July 4, 1967.

5. Expo '67, Montreal, 1967.

6. Yayoi Kusama happening at Cooper Square Playhouse, New York, 1968.

7. Carolee Schneemann, *Illinois Central Transposed*, performance, State University of New York, Albany, Intermedia '68 tour.

8. The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now*, performance, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, 1968.

9. E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) project, John Anthes (Boston) and Tracy Kinsell (Bell Labs), *Electronic Laser Light Image*, New York, 1968.

10. Hermann Nitsch, *Orgy-Mystery Theatre*, American premiere, Filmmakers' Cinematheque, New York, 1968.

11. USCO, *Fanflashstick*, strobe environment, Intermedia '68 tour.

12. Les Levine, *Photon: Strangeness No. 4*, Intermedia '68 tour.

13. Larry Warshaw, *Flower Light*, kinetic exhibition, Hofstra University, 1968.

14. The 7th Annual New York Avant-Garde Festival, Ward's Island, New York, 1969.

15. "TV as a Creative Medium," exhibition, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1969.

2 PM

Kinetic Films and USCO

Us Down by the Riverside, 1966, 3 min.

Diffraction Film, 1965, silent, 10 min.

Turn, Turn, Turn, 1966, 10 min.

Moondial Film, with Aldo Tambellini, 1966, black-and-white, 4 min.

US, 1966–67, silent, 18 min.

USCO, *Ghost Rev*, with Jud Yalkut, 1965, black-and-white, 8 min., double-screen projection.

Festival Mix, 1968, 30 min., triple-screen projection.

4 PM

VideoFilms: Cinema Metaphysique

Made in collaboration with Nam June Paik
Videotape Study No. 3, 1967–69, black-and-white, 4 min.

Electronic Moon No. 2, 1967–69, 4 1/2 min.

Cinema Metaphysique Nos. 1–4, 1966–72, black-and-white, 13 min.

Cinema Metaphysique No. 5, 1967, silent, 2 min.

Waiting for Commercials, 1972, 7 min.

Skating, from *Suite 212*, 1975, videotape, 5 min.

Electronic Fables, 1971, 9 min.

P+A-I(k), 1966, black-and-white and color, 10 min.

5 PM

Projected Music

Saturday

Aquarian Rushes, 1969, 49 min.

Sunday

The Loving Spoonful (Summer in the City), 1966, black-and-white, 3 min.

Beatles Electroniques, with Nam June Paik, 1966–69, black-and-white and color, 3 min.

Slop Print, 1973, 3 min.

China Cat Sunflower, with the Grateful Dead, 1973, 5 min.

WHITNEY

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DREAM REELS

VideoFilms and Environments

The work of Jud Yalkut emerged out of the radical, politicized utopianism of the 1960s, a decade when artists, poets, musicians, engineers, computer programmers, writers, filmmakers, and dancers combined film, music, dance, science, visual art, happenings, and performance in what came to be known as "intermedia" environments. In America, many of these environments fused the mysticism of Zen Buddhism—a major influence on the Beat generation of the 1950s—with a sense of social interconnectedness created by the new mass media and described in the writings of Buckminster Fuller and Marshall McLuhan.

In Jud Yalkut's work, the fusion of these two worlds led to a body of multimedia expanded cinema environments, made in the 1960s with the group USCO, as well as psychedelic experimental films and the earliest experiments in video art, the latter produced in collaboration with Nam June Paik. This exhibition provides the first opportunity to survey Yalkut's contribution to all three fields, bringing together his early experimental films and videotapes, two specially reconstructed film environments, and a recent video installation.

Yalkut began to work with USCO, a collective of artists and engineers, in 1965, when he became resident filmmaker for the group's collaborative projects at its commune in Garnerville, New York. During this period, other artists and groups—including Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Whitman, Experiments in Art and Technology, Stan Vanderbeek, Aldo Tambellini, and Otto Piene—were experimenting with combinations of

performance, film, and other media to break down the traditional boundaries among art forms. USCO's environments were distinct in their emphasis on communality and expanded consciousness. USCO defined intermedia as "the simultaneous use of various media to create a total environmental experience for the audience," determining that "the principles on which intermedia is based are grounded in the fields of psychology, information theory, and communication engineering."¹ These influences, all deriving from the existential and sensory relationship of the self to others and the social environment, conform to the impact of television and the cybernetic theories of Marshall McLuhan: "We now live in...a simultaneous happening...," in which, through television, "there occurs an extension of the sense of active, exploratory touch which involves all the senses simultaneously.... The contained, the distinct, the separate...are being replaced by the flowing, the unified, the fused."²

As part of USCO, Yalkut created a series of "flowing" film and slide projection environments, including *Yin/Yang sine/pulse* (1967); his own *Destruct Film* was made that same year. Both works have been reconstructed for this exhibition. In *Yin/Yang sine/pulse*, film images are projected onto silver metallic walls and revolving weather balloons. The semireflective, semitransparent weather balloons reflect and refract the projected images throughout the space, creating a sense of perceptual disorientation designed to encourage an altered state of consciousness in the viewer. The mesmeric spatial dislocations of Yalkut's kaleidoscopic

images of mandalas, colored lights, dancers, and abstract patterns evoke early twentieth-century explorations of spirituality and of the fourth dimension. The Russian mystic philosopher P.D. Ouspensky related the fourth dimension to what he termed "cosmic consciousness," arguing in 1911 that, as Linda Dalrymple-Henderson explains, "In the fourth dimension, the self-oriented sense of up-down and left-right fades away, and objects can be viewed from all sides at once."³ The USCO environments give concrete form to the interrelationship of time, consciousness, perceptual disorientation, and spatial coordination. Such unification of different dimensions is reflected in the title *Yin/Yang sine/pulse*, which invokes Chinese cosmology, trigonometry, and the human heartbeat.

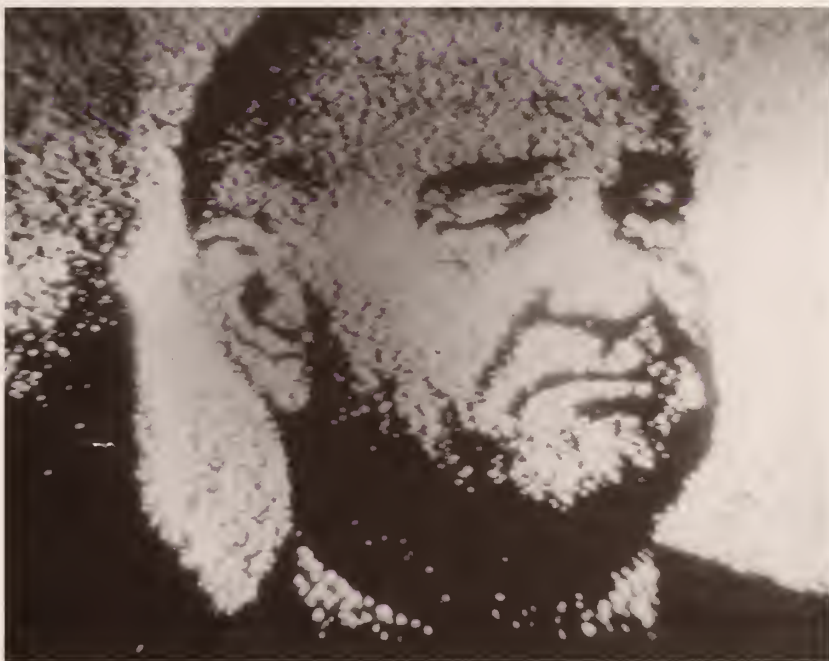


Video still from Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, *Electronic Fables*, 1971. Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix.

In the second reconstructed environment, *Destruct Film*, the traditional structure of the cinematic experience is dismantled. The film projector stands in the middle of the space rather than hidden in a booth, and the projections are thrown around the space in a circular motion. The viewer stands ankle-deep in celluloid film strewn across the floor and is encouraged to handle, look through, and take away sections of it. The apparatus of cinematic illusion is broken down into its constituent parts—projector, images, and film—within a single, all-encompassing environment. In both environments, Yalkut's fusion of Eastern mystical references, mandalic forms, whirling images, and kaleidoscopic lights and colors epitomized, in spatial terms, the psychedelic sensibility of the 1960s.

Yalkut's sensory, kinesthetic use of film is also evident in a group of early single-screen films that incorporate multiple in-frame camera superimpositions and classic 1960s music by the Byrds, the Loving Spoonful, the Beatles, and other groups. The music is cut up, looped, and electronically synthesized. In Yalkut's first videotape experiment, made in collaboration with Nam June Paik in 1966, his kaleidoscopic filmic techniques of layering, superimposition, and fragmentation combine with Paik's electromagnetic distortions of black-and-white images of the Beatles as they appear on a television set. These distortions were filmed and re-edited to create a hybrid form that Yalkut terms "videofilms." In other videofilms made with Paik, including the *Cinema Metaphysique* films of 1966 and 1967, issues of scale, framing, and screen are explored in juxtapositions of film and video screens, one large-scale, the other a small square in which images are sometimes split in two or appear running along the bottom edge of the screen.

Yalkut's role as filmmaker involved not only direct collaboration but also diaristic observation. The exhibition includes a group of films titled *The Participating Camera* that record the activities of individual artists and musicians—John Cage, Yayoi Kusama, Nam June Paik, Simone Forti, the Loving Spoonful, the Grateful Dead—as well as film journals of his performance events, happenings, and multimedia events. *Metamedia* (1972), for example, includes rare footage of Carolee Schneemann's performance *Illinois Central Transposed* (1968), Timothy Leary's psychedelic celebration *The Resurrection of Christ* (1966), and Ken Dewey's *Red, White and Blue* car collision happening in Woodstock, New York (1967).



Film still from Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, *Videotape Study No. 3*, 1967–69

Yalkut continues to explore the theme of inner contemplation in *Vision Cantos* (2000), his most recent video installation, whose title reflects the breaking down of boundaries among disciplines that has characterized all his work. In this new piece, large synthesized color images of a Tibetan shrine, animals, and natural forms are projected onto three walls of the gallery space in a sequence of silent "cantos," as if they were sections of a long poem. Once again, the viewer is encouraged to perceive the projected image as a total experience. This time, however, the installation is tranquil and balanced in structure, with space a fixed three-dimensional rather than four-dimensional entity, and states of consciousness evoked not by disorientation, but through symmetry and stillness.

Chrissie Iles

Curator, Film and Video

1. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1970), p. 348.
2. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (1967; ed. San Francisco: HardWired, 1996), pp. 63, 125, 145.
3. Linda Dalrymple-Henderson, "Mysticism, Romanticism, and the Fourth Dimension," in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), p. 221.

COVER: Video still from Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, *Beatles Electroniques*, 1966–69. Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix.

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